

YES SINHÔ, PHOTOETNOGRAPHY OF THE AUSENTE QUILOMBOLA COMMUNITY

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The Vale do Jequitinhonha, so rich and large, has already been called “continent”. It has lived, since the year of 1964, with the stigma of “poverty valley”. A politically constructed social representation reinforced by the media to justify public interventions and maintenance of large estates favoring the wealthy. The Vale do Jequitinhonha, in its Minas Gerais portion, corresponds to a region in the northeast of the state, with about 65,850 km², comprising three hydrographic areas: the upper Jequitinhonha River, the Araçuaí river and the middle and lower Jequitinhonha River, there are approximately 770 thousand inhabitants distributed in 54 municipalities.

To explore another possible reading of the Vale do Jequitinhonha, based on photoethnography, or a photoethnography shared between the researcher and the inhabitants of the place, an exercise in reinterpreting this social representation is proposed. In this case, the frame of reference is the Ausente Quilombola Community, in the municipality of Serro, upper Jequitinhonha. Created in the gold and diamond rush in the 18th century, the city has five quilombola communities certified by the Fundação Palmares. Communities marked by



cultural richness, traditions, family farming and processing of products such as sugar cane and milk.

Added to photoethnography, the investigation comprises documentary and bibliographic parts. For the documentary research, we used vehicles from the hegemonic press and with national circulation, such as *Revista Manchete*, *O Cruzeiro* or *Jornal do Brasil*, in addition to GERAES with regional circulation, which at times endorsed the official discourse of “misery valley”, at other times they tried to be a counterpoint. And in the case of the bibliographical review, works on photoethnography, on the critical theory of the cultural industry, on the historiography of Vale do Jequitinhonha are reviewed.

Constructed from participant observation, avoiding intellectual colonialism and responding to the population’s needs (Brandão 1999), the photoethnographic essay will contribute to the critical questioning of the posed representation of “misery valley”. Allowing people to express themselves about the image that best represents them and that represents the region in which they live, either by participating in the final edition of the images, or by collaborating with the construction of imagery that represents the region. According to Luiz Eduardo Robinson Achutti, it is not a simple visual transcription of the data obtained in the field, but the construction of a visual narrative “that is effective and contains interpretive information about a given reality” (Achutti 2004, 66).

Ethically, we work with guiding questions about respecting vulnerable people, avoiding images of shock and massification, proposed by Sontag (2003; 2004), Martins (2008), Galard (2012), Didi-Huberman (2017), Adorno and Horkheimer (1985), Rancière (2012). Kant (2013) is also a reference when dealing with ethics with the concept of categorical imperative, when he says that we must act with enough common sense so that our actions do not harm us or harm others. And that we know how to handle the responsibilities of agency. A similar condition defended by Habermas (2004), about the need for common sense to defend particular issues in collective struggles, to recognize differences in order to guarantee democracy.

Aesthetically, from concepts of imaginary documentary (Lombardi 2007), concerned photography (Bogre 2012) and the concerns of the artist photographer (Rouillé 2009), we work with our photographic language so that the proposed interpretation of the community can be respectful and poetic.

The research does not deny the difficulties and contradictions existing in the region (Leitão & Filho 2019), but rather the representation by an image, a concept, built from political and economic interests (Servilha



2012). To give new meaning to this image, based on coexistence with the community, is something that is still unheard of in Vale do Jequitinhonha.

To give new meaning to the experience, the coexistence with the community, is, therefore, to read and find other images of Vale do Jequitinhonha. After all, as Tina (Laurentina) teaches us, “yes, sir, it’s when you’ve seen the person earlier that day. It is in the return that you speak”¹.

1. Interview given to the researcher during the field visit.





























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ABSTRACT

The Vale do Jequitinhonha is known for its mineral wealth and cultural diversity, however, opportunely, the recognition “valley of misery” was built by political actions and the press to represent the region. The purpose of this work is to give new meaning to this social representation, based on a photoethnography developed with people from the Comunidade Quilombola do Ausente, in the municipality of Serro/MG. For this, based on previous works that discussed this performance of the press and the economic interests behind this constructed recognition, we sought to expand the debates already presented and based on the coexistence with the quilombolas, we built a photoethnography that could be an alternative to represent the region. A relationship built by rethinking concepts and values, and provoking them to also bring a particular look to present their community, in addition to participating, in some way, in the final editing of the images.

KEYWORDS

Culture;
Subjectivity;
Religion; Ethnicity.



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